

**In the Claims:**

Please cancel claims 43 to 59 without prejudice:

Claims 1 to 59 (canceled).

60(previously presented). A method of protecting hair ends during a permanent wave treatment of hair, said method comprising the steps of:

- a) providing a gel comprising undissolved water-swollen particles of at least one superabsorbing polymer;
- b) applying the gel of step a) to the hair ends to be protected; and
- c) after the applying of the gel in step b), performing the permanent wave treatment.

61(previously presented). The method as defined in claim 60, wherein the undissolved water-swollen particles of the at least one superabsorbing polymer have average diameters of not greater than 2000  $\mu\text{m}$ .

62(previously presented). The method as defined in claim 61, wherein said average diameters are from 40 to 1400  $\mu\text{m}$ .

63(previously presented). The method as defined in claim 60, wherein the at least one superabsorbing polymer is selected from the group consisting of at least partially neutralized cross-linked superabsorbing polyacrylic acids, at least

partially neutralized cross-linked superabsorbing polymethacrylic acids and superabsorbing graft copolymers of starch and acrylic acid.

64(previously presented). The method as defined in claim 60, wherein, before water absorption, the at least one superabsorbing polymer has an average particle size from 100 to 850  $\mu\text{m}$ .

65(previously presented). The method as defined in claim 64, wherein said average particle size is less than 200  $\mu\text{m}$ .

66(previously presented). The method as defined in claim 60, wherein said at least one superabsorbing polymer has a water absorption capacity for demineralized water of at least 20 g/g.

67(previously presented). The method as defined in claim 60, containing from 0.1 to 5 percent by weight of said at least one superabsorbing polymer.

68(previously presented). A method for permanent shaping of hair, said method comprising the steps of:

- a) providing a gel comprising undissolved water-swollen particles of at least one superabsorbing polymer;
- b) putting the hair in a desired shape;

- c) at least one of before and after putting the hair in the desired shape, applying a shaping agent to the hair;
- d) before the hair is treated with the shaping agent in step c), treating the hair with the gel provided in step a);
- e) rinsing the hair with water after the applying of the shaping agent to the hair;
- f) oxidatively post-treating the hair after the applying of the shaping agent to the hair;
- g) again rinsing the hair and optionally arranging the hair in a water wave; and
- h) then drying the hair.

69(previously presented). The method as defined in claim 68, wherein the undissolved water-swollen particles of the at least one superabsorbing polymer have average diameters of not greater than 2000  $\mu\text{m}$ .

70(previously presented). The method as defined in claim 69, wherein said average diameters are from 40 to 1400  $\mu\text{m}$ .

71(previously presented). The method as defined in claim 68, wherein the at least one superabsorbing polymer is selected from the group consisting of at least partially neutralized cross-linked superabsorbing polyacrylic acids, at least

partially neutralized cross-linked superabsorbing polymethacrylic acids and superabsorbing graft copolymers of starch and acrylic acid.

72(previously presented). The method as defined in claim 68, wherein, before water absorption, the at least one superabsorbing polymer has an average particle size from 100 to 850  $\mu\text{m}$ .

73(previously presented). The method as defined in claim 72, wherein said average particle size is less than 200  $\mu\text{m}$ .

74(previously presented). The method as defined in claim 68, wherein said at least one superabsorbing polymer has a water absorption capacity for demineralized water of at least 20 g/g.

75(previously presented). The method as defined in claim 68, containing from 0.1 to 5 percent by weight of said at least one superabsorbing polymer.